

Just Add Hormones

by Matt Kailey

Reviewed by Dave Parker

Matt Kailey is a 40+ - year old FtM who writes expressively and humorously, while covering about everything you want to know about FtM transition. His book is an interesting mix of fact, opinion, and philosophy, presented in the environment of the author's personal story.

In his introduction, Kailey makes an important statement: "I've lived in society as a female and as a male – and for a very brief time as something no one could seem to identify. There's not as much difference as people who have lived as only one or the other might think."

Kailey speaks out against the society's concept of binary gender and its unwillingness to accept difference. He describes his struggles with identity during transition. Soon after progressing as far as he desired with transition, he recognized that he was reluctant to give up many comfortable female characteristics, such as compassion and empathy. Rather than subscribing to a label, Kailey states "I'm just me. I've blended female and male parts into a whole being – harmoniously." Gender identity is not an either – or dichotomy.

He expresses strong opinions about choice, pointing out that giving up the concept of choice gives someone other than one's self power over you. Choice equals personal power! Choice allows personal pride! There are many choices involved in gender transition – do you want surgery? If so, how much? How do you wish to present? Do you stay with your current employer, or take time off and find new employment after transition? If married, how will you and your spouse deal with this? These are choices that should be made with full knowledge that you will probably not match the models in Vogue or GQ. Each choice carries consequences.

Kailey's discussion of sexual intimacy confounds those who need to find a one-word definition for sexuality. He is open to intimacy with anyone, regardless of genitalia, even though he is primarily attracted to maleness.

One thing that really stuck out to this reviewer was a discussion on simply walking down the street as a woman and then as a man, especially after dark. As a female, Kailey was cautious about men when out walking. As a male, he is saddened by the fact that some women clutch their purses and cross the street as he approaches.

I like this book. It is an easy read, yet covers much of what an FtM transperson or their loving family member wants to know.